Indo-Russian trade talks

38. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Russia has agreed to purchase Indian tobacco during the recent Indo-Russian trade talks held in January, 2000;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) other decisions taken for diversifying and expanding bilateral trade in hi-tech items?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) The 6th Session of the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC) was held in New Delhi on January 14-15, 2000. A Protocol of the 6th Session of the IRIGC was signed at the conclusion of the meeting by the Co-Chairmen of the IRIGC, Finance Minister on our side and the Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Dr. Viktor Khristenko. During the meeting, various measures relating to further development of trade and economic cooperation between India and the Russian Federation were deliberated upon. It was noted the tobacco is among the traditional items of export from India to the Russian Federation. Both side agreed to take necessary steps to expand the overall volume of trade, including tobacco.

(c) The 6th Session of the IRIGC agreed to take appropriate measures towards further expansion and diversification of bilateral trade through greater representation of non-traditional and hi-tech items.

Visit of US President to India

39. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the President of U.S.A. is scheduled to visit India shortly;

(b) if so, the avowed objectives of his visit;

(c) whether he would also visit any other country in the sub-continent and if so, the details thereof; and

(d) what positive gains does Government expect out of this visit?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. The President of the United States is scheduled to visit India for five days from 20th March 2000.

(b) Both sides agree that the objective of the visit of President Clinton is to build a qualitatively new and closer relationship between the two democracies, and for the two countries to work more co-operatively in the future.

(c) The US Government has announced that the US President will make a one-day visit to Bangladesh, along with his visit to India.

(d) The visit is expected to further increase mutual understanding on political and security matters and intensify mutually beneficial co-operation in trade and investment, energy and environment, science and technology, education and culture, counter terrorism and narcotics control.

Fake passports racket in Mumbai

40. SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a racket has been going on for obtaining fake passports for ISI agents in Mumbai;

(b) whether any officials of passport office are also involved in this; and

(c) if so, what action has been taken against the official involved?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) There has been one case recently where passport has been issued by the Regional Passport Office, Mumbai to an applicant who is suspected of being and ISI agent.

(b) and (c) The investigating authorities have arrested three